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New York

President:	Mr. Van Oosterom	(Netherlands)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
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	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Ms. Tachco

Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

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The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace and security in Africa

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Nigeria to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Mohammed Bila, representative of the Lake Chad Basin Commission; and Ms. Chitra Nagarajan, Senior Conflict Adviser, Adelphi.

Ms. Nagarajan is joining via video teleconference from Abuja.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Recalling the Security Council's latest note 507 on its working methods, I wish to encourage all participants, both members and non-members of the Council, to deliver their statements in five minutes or less. Note 507 also encourages briefers to be succinct and to focus on key issues. Briefers are further encouraged to limit their initial remarks to the agreed time limits.

I wish to warmly welcome the Deputy Secretary-General, Her Excellency Ms. Amina Mohammed, who is joining via video teleconference from Monrovia, and I now give her the floor.

The Deputy Secretary-General: I wish to begin by thanking the Permanent Mission of the Netherlands and Ambassador Van Oosterom for having convened this briefing and for the really dynamic presidency of the Security Council this month. Let me also say that I wish to congratulate the Security Council, because I am here in Monrovia as we come to the closure of the United Nations Mission in Liberia tomorrow. This is really an exciting moment, although there are a lot of concerns about how we will continue to build on the gains of peace and to ensure that there is sustainable development. But the Government and the President of Liberia were very, very appreciative of the support of the United Nations and wished me to convey that to the Council.

I welcome this opportunity to brief the Council on the situation in the Lake Chad basin. Since the last such briefing, in September 2017 (see S/PV.8047), considerable progress has been made in the fight against Boko Haram. The Multinational Joint Task Force operations have contributed to the liberation of hostages and led to many territorial gains. The Secretary-General commends the Governments of the region for their sustained efforts and increased coordination, which have been crucial. It is now key that we stabilize the areas that have been reclaimed and that we seize the opportunity to really promote sustainable development.

Unfortunately, Boko Haram continues to carry out raids, abductions and suicide bombings, as demonstrated last month by the horrific abduction of 110 schoolgirls in north-east Nigeria's Yobe state. Today, though, we are very grateful and relieved that most of those girls — 105 — have been returned to their families.

The United Nations is supporting the African Union and the Lake Chad Basin Commission in developing a stabilization, recovery and resilience strategy for the region, in line with resolution 2349 (2017). The strategy, we hope, will be launched next month in N'Djamena. In parallel, the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for Central Africa and for West Africa and the Sahel continue their efforts, in close partnership with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Lake Chad Basin Commission, to address the root causes of the crisis.

Violations of human rights continue to fuel insecurity in the Lake Chad basin. Investments and strengthening community justice mechanisms will be essential to promoting reconciliation, ensuring accountability and sustaining peace. It is also critical for counter-terrorism activities and initiatives aimed at preventing violent extremism to integrate the human rights and the gender dimensions. We welcome the recruitment of the three African Union-Lake Chad Basin Commission human rights officers as part of the civilian component of the Multinational Joint Task Force. The appointment of a gender advisor for the Force is, however, needed urgently to enhance the protection of women and girls and ensure their participation in peace and development processes.

Too many girls and women across the region continue to experience sexual and gender-based

violence and other violations of their rights. Boko Haram has abducted more than 4,000 women and girls. Those who are able to return often face stigmatization by their communities. Over the past several years, the group's use of women and girls to carry out suicide attacks has increased dramatically. One reason may be the lack of women in the security sector who can check other women at checkpoints. Clearly, women's participation in efforts to promote gender equality are critical elements of our response.

Boko Haram, sadly and horrifically, used children in 135 suicide attacks in 2017, representing a fivefold increase from 2016. The international community must do more to respond to the plight of children affected by the upheaval in the region, including through support for the return of children to their communities and a more concerted effort on reintegation and rehabilitation.

The humanitarian situation in the Lake Chad basin remains complex and dire, with 10.7 million people in need of life-saving assistance and 2.3 million people — including 1.5 million children — forcibly displaced from their homes. We thank the Governments of Cameroon and Nigeria for their continued cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in the framework of the tripartite agreement, and we encourage all the affected States to fully implement the 2016 Abuja Action Statement.

Humanitarian assistance has scaled up considerably and reached more than 6 million people in 2017. Food security has improved in the north-east of Nigeria, where famine was averted last year. But that progress is still very fragile. As of today, 4.5 million people are severely food insecure across the Lake Chad basin, and that number is expected to rise to 5.8 million by June.

The scale-up of assistance has taken place in an extremely volatile environment. On 1 March, three aid workers were killed in the town of Rann, in Borno state, following an attack by suspected Boko Haram insurgent. Three others are still missing, and humanitarian aid has temporarily been suspended. An estimated $1.6 billion will be required to assist 7.8 million people in four countries. I call on Member States to ensure that the humanitarian appeal is well funded and that the pledges are disbursed promptly. The experience of the last appeal was successful. It was very much appreciated, it came in time and it has been well disbursed.

I would also like to highlight the importance of strengthening the Safe Schools initiative, as well as communications infrastructure, so that people can call for assistance when needed. This was a major gap in the recent abduction of the 110 girls in Yobe state. The crisis has resulted in massive destruction of basic infrastructure, health and educational facilities, commercial buildings, private houses and agricultural assets. Along with the impacts of violent extremism, underdevelopment, demographic shifts and climate change, we can see another powerful example of a complex, multidimensional situation that really requires an integrated approach to addressing the humanitarian and development challenges that will link to sustainable peace.

The United Nations continues to support the affected Governments in creating livelihoods, strengthening institutions, building community resilience and taking other steps to address the root causes. National and local non-governmental organizations and faith-based organizations still have an invaluable role to play in prevention and reintegration efforts.

Restoring the Lake Chad ecosystem is going to be essential. It would improve livelihoods for millions of people, reduce local tensions and foster regional integration and development. Last month's international conference on Lake Chad in Abuja was successful, and the adoption of the Abjua declaration reaffirmed the region's commitment to increasing cooperation to address the socioeconomic impact of climate change and instability in the Sahel, West Africa and the Lake Chad region.

Finally, the Security Council's visit to the region over a year ago should not be underestimated, and the adoption of resolution 2349 (2017) really created a momentum that must be maintained. The visit by the African Union Peace and Security Council in July 2017 further highlighted the challenges faced by the Multinational Joint Task Force. Sustained international, financial and technical support for the Force remains crucial to protecting the fragile progress made in the fight against Boko Haram. The joint ECCAS-ECOWAS summit on Boko Haram — the first to be held in the first half of 2018 — will be another important undertaking. We must continue to address these complex challenges, in close cooperation with the affected countries and all relevant subregional organizations, in line resolution 2349 (2017).

We should also recognize that security measures and military operations have proven limits. There will be no sustaining peace without sustainable development, and development gains will always be at risk without lasting peace. I hope that we can work together to end this crisis, which has caused immense suffering and continues to have serious consequences well beyond the borders.

The President: I thank the Deputy Secretary-General for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Bila.

Mr. Bila: My name is Mohammed Bila. I am a remote sensing expert in the Lake Chad Basin Commission, in N'Djamena. I have been working in the Komadugu-Yobe basin in Nigeria since 1990 as a hydrologist at the Federal Ministry of Water Resources in Abuja. I have been in the service of the Lake Chad Basin Commission since April 2002.

My briefing today is going to focus on climate variability and its impact on the vulnerability of the Lake Chad basin, and on what the United Nations can do to reduce the general vulnerability of the region. To help in understanding the situation, I will share my experience from a community that survives on cultivating the lake floor and then on four communities that used to depend on the shoreline of the Lake Chad but are now 10 kilometres away from the lake and depend on sharing the river Komadugu-Yobe for their livelihood.

The years 1983 and 1984 proved to be the driest in Borno in recent history. The minor tributaries of Lake Chad — the rivers Yobe, Yedseram and the El Beid — were dry and the level of Lake Chad fell three metres below the critical level for the pumping station at Kirinowa. Consequently, the South Chad Irrigation Project (SCIP) could not irrigate any land from 1984 to 1986. The lake floor became a refuge and offered an opportunity to farm workers from the South Chad Irrigation Project to cultivate beans and maize. In 1985, there were 25,000 people living in 49 villages along the western portion of Lake Chad in Nigeria. In 2010, the population in the central part of the north basin was estimated to be 56,421, living in 387 villages on the lake floor. Lake-floor cultivation of crops using the residual soil moisture, which began around 1985 or 1986, is one of the methods of adaptation to drought and deprivation for the communities around Lake Chad.

One of the villages located near the border tripoint marker between the Niger, Nigeria and Chad is Kaukiri. In 2010, there was an estimated population of 1,425 of largely lake-floor farmers of beans and maize in the village. The local produce market brings together farmers, livestock herders and traders from all three countries. In July 2010, when I was on a mission, the traditional chief reported that for the previous three years, the usual recession moisture farming could not take place because the Komadugu-Yobe river did not bring water to the farmlands around Kaukiri. There was no evidence that those three years of failure in agriculture and loss of livelihood for all island villages around Kaukiri were noticed or supported by local authorities or local community-based organizations. As of today, no authority can detect if a similar disaster is occurring because there is only one water-level measurement station in the whole 25,000 square kilometres of Lake Chad's old shoreline, located in Bol, Chad. In general, the environmental monitoring network in the Lake Chad basin is inadequate, sparse and poorly funded and operated.

Malam Fatori and Kaniram, in Nigeria, and Bosso and Mamouri, in the Niger, are riparian settlements of the Komadugu-Yobe river, which forms the border between the Niger and Nigeria. Prior to the Sahel droughts, all four settlements were located on the Lake Chad shoreline, but the shrinking of Lake Chad has reduced the communities to competing for the seasonal flow of the Komadugu-Yobe river for dry-season agriculture. The competition for the river has led to claims and counterclaims of river diversion by the communities on both sides of the border, and the loss of livelihoods may have led to the build-up of social tension among young people prior to the outbreak of the insurgency in 2012. While the Niger-Nigerian mixed commission has established a mechanism for consultations on the development of new water abstraction at the national level to prevent a further build-up of social tension, similar cross-border cooperation in local water governance could help with conflict management and the reduction of social tension among young people.

Those examples are two of the possibly many incidences that occur across the Lake Chad basin region that are not noticed on the national level because our national water-governance mechanism is not structured to capture such information or respond to it. Equally, at the regional and global levels, climate variability and

its impact on the loss of livelihood were not noticed due to deficiencies at the lower levels of water governance.

An obvious solution to the poor water management that has led to the loss of livelihoods and the rising tensions is to restructure the water governance mechanism to operate in a participatory manner at the local level, with input from resource user groups. User-group capacities should include resource monitoring and reporting as a concurrent activity associated with resource exploitation.

At the regional level, the solution must acknowledge the link between local environmental degradation and the recurrent Sahel drought. The environmental challenges facing the Lake Chad basin are connected to the challenges of climate change faced by the Sahel region of Africa. The Sahel is increasingly facing extreme variability of climate resulting in frequent droughts, short-duration, high-intensity rainfall, desertification, water scarcity, land degradation and ultimately, food insecurity. Consequently, addressing the climatic root causes of local challenges through risk assessment and management will require a similar solution at the Sahel regional level.

Future threats linked to climate risks will continue to exist in the Lake Chad basin and other regions of the world currently facing fragility related to climate risks. The Security Council is unique in its position not only to stop current conflicts, but also to prevent future conflict through climate diplomacy, based on early warning and risk assessment reports by other United Nations agencies in the field.

Over the past two weeks, the Lake Chad Basin Commission has participated in an integrated joint mission with the United Nations, non-governmental organizations, researchers and development partners coordinated by the United Nations Development Programme to the Lac region of the Republic of Chad. During the mission, we were informed that in the Lac region, there are 120 polders that could be developed for year-round agriculture. We saw how women's community-based organizations are using the polders for vegetable gardens, and we heard the young people's request for dams to be built as a management mechanism to exploit more of those polders. Such community-based organizations could be created around each polder or resource user group and provided with the requisite training and equipment to monitor and report the water level to supplement the lack of information at the national and regional levels.

National and local-level information and assessment could be aggregated annually by the United Nations country teams and then integrated in the reporting of the regular briefings delivered by the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA). Global-level early warning could be issued by the Security Council as the need arises to serve as a basis for measures integrating climate adaptation, cooperation in water governance, conflict prevention and management, enhancing livelihood resilience and global security. I have three recommendations for the Security Council.

First, a participatory system of local water governance should be introduced into the Lake Chad basin as a priority. Secondly, climate-security risk assessment and reporting from the conflict affected zones of the Sahel and the Lake Chad basin should be included in the regular briefings given by UNOWAS and UNOCA to the Security Council. Thirdly, in view of the projection of continuing global warming within conflict-affected regions, climate-security risk assessment and reporting from the local, national and regional levels should be aggregated and presented to the Security Council to serve as early warning for conflict-prevention advice to United Nations Members and for integrating climate adaptation, cooperation in water governance, conflict prevention and management, enhancing livelihood resilience and the global security of the planet.

The President: I thank Mr. Bila for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Nagarajan.

Ms. Nagarajan: I thank the Kingdom of the Netherlands for inviting me to participate in this briefing as its presides over the Council this month. I also thank my fellow briefers, Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and Mr. Mohammed Bila of the Lake Chad Basin Commission.

This year marks 15 years since the start of the violence we identify with armed groups in Lake Chad region. I will focus my briefing on current conflict dynamics, potential trajectories and the need to prevent the root causes of future conflicts. I was born and lived in Maiduguri. I have been working on conflict analysis, human rights, peacebuilding and protection for the

past 12 years. I will talk about the region as a whole, but given my background I will draw a great deal on Nigeria. I will talk about four sets of dynamics.

The first revolves around environmental and climate factors. The problem is not the alleged shrinking of Lake Chad, but rather, as just presented by my colleague, Mohammed Bila, increased variability. Lake Chad has fluctuated throughout history. Communities adapt to the changes, although, recently, coping mechanisms have been tested. The issue is rather that of the governance of and access to natural resources, the impact of insecurity and increased climate variability. Farmers with whom I spoke complained of the impacts of changing lake levels and increased rainfall variability, and said that that causes their inability to plant properly, lower or no crop yields, and insects that do not die because there is no rain. Pastoralists have had to change grazing routes. Fishermen talk of changing amounts of fish in water bodies. We are seeing, above all, decreased resilience owing to conflict and climate.

In December 2017, one Nigerian farmer told me how he used to farm by relying on the rainy season, the lake or a stream for irrigation in any given year. He said that if any one of them were insufficient in any given year, that was okay, as all three disasters would not occur at the same time. However, he said that now, owing to the crisis, every avenue to develop oneself economically has been destroyed. One does not have the money, and even if one did and failed — which is likely because of the lack of rainfall, security restrictions and Boko Haram — one cannot do the others. Virtually all economic activities have collapsed.

Secondly, we also see tensions among and within occupational groups. The conflict among and within the groups of farmers, pastoralists, fishermen and hunters has been exacerbated by a decrease in arable land. Planting crops on grazing routes and areas, changing movements of pastoralists, changing rainfall patterns affecting crop yields and cattle health, military restrictions, security concerns and an insufficiency of land and water result in an increase of population density owing to displacement. Moreover the conflict has led to increased ethnic and social tensions because of the economic impact in all four countries.

Thirdly, firewood collection by civilians and the cutting down of trees by the military are increasing deforestation. That, as well as agricultural burning of the vaster region, has not only a current impact on protection and security, but also entails future ramifications related to soil degradation, desertification, agricultural livelihoods and the availability of wood for smoking fish. There have been no clear empirical links made between those changes and recruitment into armed opposition groups, but those impacts on livelihoods and increasing inequality are natural incentives to join such groups, while they are happening in the same space. There may well be a link.

The second dynamic that I will talk about is the gendered nature of violence. Men and older boys are often the first to flee insecure areas. They are deliberately targeted, killed and forcibly recruited by armed groups. They are viewed with suspicion, arrested and detained by security agencies, and they are involved in fighting, thereby leaving women of all ages, as well as girls, younger boys and older men, struggling to cope. At the same time, with the increasing level of crime directed against women and girls, from their abduction from schools, which we have seen in international headlines to their use as human detonative explosives or so-called suicide bombers. We also see higher levels of early and forced marriage either to fighters or due to familial pressures owing to a lack of resources, sexual exploitation, abuse and violence, including by those who are supposed to protect and not exploit them, and survival sex.

People with disabilities are also disproportionately affected. They are unable to escape violence and struggle to cope when they are displaced. Unknown numbers of people have also acquired disabilities because of the violence. Their experiences have led many to struggle with their trauma. What does that mean for the long-term when many men are missing, thereby leaving the women to cope without them; when many women have suffered violence and trauma; and when all children and young people have either taken part in or experienced violence?

The third dynamic that I will talk about concerns tensions among internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, returnees and host communities. The people of the region have been extraordinarily generous in sheltering and assisting those displaced, which began long before the humanitarian community showed up. With time, that dynamic has given rise to some tensions. For example, together with Mohammed Bila, I was in Baga Sola in Chad two weeks ago. There, Nigerian fishermen feel discriminated against with regard to access to information and services as they

cannot speak the local languages. Those tensions are unfortunately exacerbated by humanitarian assistance as it is seen as benefiting only IDPs despite the violence affecting everyone.

The fourth dynamic concerns governance and providing security. The region has long suffered from weak Government and certain State services or their absence, which has been worsened by the conflict. There is also dissatisfaction with community leaders. Before the crisis, they were viewed at times as politicized and corrupt, and they are now increasingly seen as diverting aid for themselves and their families. Moreover, we know that corruption and inequality are root causes of conflict, and people believe that those have worsened. Providing security is also problematic. Military action or inaction has caused harm to civilians through, first, failure to protect communities from violence; secondly, failure to prevent collateral damage during operations; and, thirdly, the direct targeting of civilians with human rights abuses.

I do not underestimate the scale of challenges facing the militaries of the region, and we have seen some positive developments. For example, in Nigeria a national policy on civilian protection is currently awaiting President Buhari's signature, and the military is trying to further institutionalize civilian protection and harm mitigation into their training. However, civilian harm continues, thereby increasing unhappiness and frustration with the State. There are also issues concerning community militias originally set up to protect civilian populations. In Nigeria, there are increasing concerns about the yan gora, or Civilian Joint Task Force, in particular. People say that they intimidate, settle scores, trade drugs, extort, steal, divert aid and sexually harass, exploit and abuse. People are worried that that increasing politicization, electoral mobilization, levels of criminality and the number gangs will lead to a new conflict phase.

Although we hope that peace will return soon, I will now outline for the Council three ways in which the conflict might further develop.

First, the group headed by Shekau may be defeated, but the group headed by Abu Al-Barnawi may grow stronger and more difficult to combat because avoiding civilian harm means that it might be able to retain its own fighters and also ensure more strategic relations with the local populations.

The second scenario is that community militias, owing to incomplete and ineffective processes of disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration, form the next phase of the conflict, whereby engaging in criminality escalates into sustained violence against civilian populations and, perhaps, the State.

The third scenario is that intercommunal tensions, coupled with reprisal attacks and decreased access to resources, as people are living in increasingly crowded spaces, lead to the formation of identity-based community militias, thereby resulting in clashes and violence. Let us also remember the upcoming elections to be held in Cameroon in October and in Nigeria in February 2019. It is important that political contestations do not affect and are not affected by those unknowns.

What are therefore the pathways to peace? First of all, the crisis is not over. Unfortunately, humanitarian needs continue. Funding and support for humanitarian action are essential. We must also pay attention to current conflict dynamics and trajectories.

The Lake Chad region needs to be on the Security Council's agenda. The Council needs more systematic reports that are conflict-, climate- and gender-sensitive from the Secretariat, including on root causes and conflict drivers, as well as more regular situational briefings to ensure that the Council is attuned to changing conflict dynamics in a volatile region.

Secondly, we need proper analysis on which to base policy and programme decisions. There may be humanitarian needs assessments that are sufficient for the humanitarian community, but proper integrated analysis that links conflict, climate, gender and social inclusion is lacking. That does not mean we should do nothing while awaiting the analysis, but we must ensure that inspections are meaningful, do no harm and are responsive to the situation.

That brings me to my third and final point. The United Nations, donors and affected States must ensure that every cypher, naira, euro, pound and dollar spent in the region from now on is context-sensitive and covers climate, conflict, gender and social inclusion and that the impact of interventions against those factors is monitored. For example, a livelihoods programme must look at future rainfall trajectories to see which crops would remain viable in future. If it supports the polder system in Chad, it must consider who will and

will not have access to the increased areas of fertile land that would bring about and how that would play into existing tensions. Otherwise, interventions will not lead to sustainable change and improvement in the lives of the people in the Lake Chad basin region.

Even worse than a bad situation is hope for change only for the optimism to turn to ashes. A few weeks ago, I met a young former member of the Jamaah Ansharusy Syariah. She joined the group to make society better. She told me that she thought society would have improved while she was away but when she returned, she saw that society had become worse. Looking back 15 to 20 years ago, we can see the genesis of where we are today. For most people, circumstances have greatly deteriorated. The question is: Did the previous situation lead to the current conflict and crisis? Is the current situation is worse than the previous one and, if so, what does that mean for the future?

I urge the members of the Security Council to take action now so as to prevent the current conflict dynamics from becoming the root causes of future conflicts.

The President: I thank Ms. Nagarajan for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): I would like to thank you, Sir, and your delegation for organizing today's briefing and for giving us the opportunity to discuss the situation in the Lake Chad basin one year after we in the Council visited the region and adopted resolution 2349 (2017), which was unique in its comprehensive approach, integrating development, human rights and security.

I would also like to thank our briefers today for their reflections on the humanitarian and security situations and for their suggestions on the next steps to address the root causes of the conflict. They have already made a number of concrete proposals and I hope that careful note of them has been taken by the Secretariat. We look forward to discussing some of those ideas later with other Member States.

The security situation in the Lake Chad basin continues to be of great concern. On 2 March, the Council condemned the attack on humanitarian workers in Rann and another in Dapchi, in which a large number of schoolgirls were abducted.

The humanitarian crisis remains as dire as when we visited the region a year ago. The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance remains at 10.7 million, and 5.8 million people are now experiencing severe food insecurity. We call upon donors to maintain the momentum of the response, including by fulfilling the financial requirement of $1.6 billion for 2018. We call on all parties to the conflict to grant safe, timely and unimpeded access to humanitarian organizations, in line with international humanitarian law.

Based on the humanitarian and security situations, it is clear that the international community and the Security Council must remain fully engaged in the crisis. On 21 March, the United Kingdom opened a diplomatic office in Chad to facilitate efforts to stabilize the region and address the root causes of insecurity.

We welcome the steps taken by the Governments of the region through the Multinational Joint Task Force to address the terrorist threat. I welcome the presence of the representative of Nigeria at the table. I take this opportunity to acknowledge his country's determination and leadership in fighting terrorism and to salute the partnership that the United Kingdom and Nigeria have formed on this and other vital issues.

Although the military approach has an important role to play in stabilizing the region, the solution to the crisis cannot be solely military. As recognized in resolution 2349 (2017), to achieve sustainable peace it is vital that the root causes of regional instability, including poverty, climate change, inequality and violent extremism, be understood and addressed. We recognize the ongoing efforts of the countries of the region, both individually and jointly, through the Lake Chad Basin Commission to achieve that aim. We must ensure that Governments of the region demonstrate strong leadership, in particular on the demobilization, deradicalization and reintegration of former combatants. The international community and we in the United Nations must support those efforts with robust strategies on prevention and a sustaining peace approach.

The Deputy Secretary-General has shown great leadership in bringing together the diffuse activities of many United Nations development agencies in the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, linked to wider security efforts. We must apply those lessons and that approach to the Lake Chad basin region. Special, political missions, in particular the United

Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) must work to ensure that their efforts are coherent and that regional strategies are mutually supported. I fully agree with the representative of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, who stated that a comprehensive analysis should be included in the future briefings of UNOCA and UNOWAS to the Council. The United Nations strategy must be based on accurate information so that future crises can be predicted and the Council, the wider United Nations family and Governments of the region can take preventive action in line with the Secretary-General's own focus on prevention.

On this World Water Day, let us remember that climate and ecological changes are a major root cause of the conflict. If we want to build sustainable peace and promote sustainable development, we must support efforts to build livelihoods that are resistant to climate change, including through adequate risk assessments and risk-management strategies. It is also vital that the United Nations and Governments of the region take the particular concerns of women and children into account in stabilization, conflict-resolution and peacebuilding efforts, in accordance with resolution 1325 (2000). The United Nations could support it through a stronger, more consistent in-country presence.

As the representative of the United Kingdom stated when we adopted resolution 2349 (2017), "[w]e will fail the people of the region if we do not respond to what we saw" (*S/PV.7911, p.5*). When we travelled to the region, we saw the root causes and the serious consequences of the conflict and we must respond. The Lake Chad basin is a region that requires a sustaining peace approach and we would hope that the Secretary-General will be able to demonstrate the support of the United Nations by visiting the region, as set out in resolution 2349 (2017).

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): As an observer State of the African Union, Kazakhstan commends the Kingdom of the Netherlands for selecting a very timely and critical issue for consideration during its presidency of the Security Council this month. We look forward to a discussion that results in greater awareness and action.

We also thank our briefers, Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed; the representative of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, Mr. Bila; and Senior Conflict Adviser at Adelphi, Ms. Chitra Nagarajan, for their updates. We also welcome the delegation of Nigeria to the Chamber today.

The humanitarian situation across the Lake Chad region is presently one of most severe in the world. This year approximately 10.7 million people are in need of relief assistance and persistent insecurity and violence continue to drive displacements in higher proportions. In addition, approximately 4.5 million people are currently food insecure. We therefore call on the international community to increase its support for humanitarian assistance in the affected countries. Sustained humanitarian efforts must be accompanied and reinforced by support for recovery and increased development efforts.

The worsening ecological situation in the region also has a deep impact on its socioeconomic prospects. It is estimated that 40 million people depend on Lake Chad for crop and livestock farming, fishing and trade. Over the past 60 years, the size of Lake Chad has decreased by 95 per cent as a result of the consequences of an extended drought and climate change, affecting both the ecosystems and the economy of the region. Consequently, unemployed youth fall prey to the extremist group Boko Haram.

Along with the efforts of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) to address security issues, it is urgent that international partners and donors support projects such the Inter Basin Water Transfer, aimed at restoring Lake Chad. Such a measure would foster not only regional integration but also development. We commend the Government of Nigeria and the Commission for hosting the international conference on saving Lake Chad, held in Abuja last month. We emphasize the importance of the United Nations continuing to carry out risk assessments of climate-related security challenges, when appropriate, and to highlight the need to implement the relevant Security Council documents to mitigate the surge.

On the security front, we strongly condemn the attacks on the civilian population by Boko Haram insurgents, especially the abduction of children, women and girls for sexual exploitation and for the purpose of suicide bombing. Commendable results have been achieved by the Multinational Joint Task Force in reducing the operational capacities and the geographical reach of Boko Haram. Likewise, it is critical to continue to strengthen the partnership among regional countries through the Joint Steering Committee

of the LCBC and the African Union with a view to also mobilizing support for the urgent operational needs of the Task Force.

However, United Nations support and engagement in regional issues are vital. We note the efforts of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, as well as for Central Africa, to enhance coordination and the support of regional partners, with a focus on joint support for the LCBC and on combating Boko Haram in addition to other areas of cooperation.

We would like to stress the importance of strengthening the nexus between security and development as the bedrock of the stabilization, reconciliation and development of the Lake Chad region. We also firmly believe that the United Nations and regional organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States and the Economic Community of Central African States, should develop a single and comprehensive operational strategy that addresses the root causes of the crisis. Such a strategy should be implemented in close cooperation with the affected countries. We therefore welcome the holding of the first regional stabilization conference in the Lake Chad Basin region as an initial step towards that purpose.

As proved time and again, in conflict situations a regional approach is one of the most effective ways to move forward. We therefore commend the measures of the United Nations and the African Union, together with other international organizations and Governments, to introduce peace initiatives in the Lake Chad basin region. That in turn requires a synthesis between bottom-up and top-down strategies to bring about a true and lasting transformation.

Mr. Albanai (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Ms. Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General, and Mr. Mohammed Bila, representative of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, as well as Ms. Chitra Nagarajan, for their significant briefings on the most recent developments in the Lake Chad basin region. I would also like to commend the Kingdom of Netherlands for the choice of today's topic, which draws our attention to the various challenges faced by the Lake Chad basin and their direct and indirect consequences for the countries of the region. In my statement, I will focus on three challenges, namely, security and humanitarian and environmental challenges.

First, with regard to terrorism and security challenges, the countries of the Lake Chad basin — in particular Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria — have been targeted by terrorist attacks, including those of Boko Haram and what is known as Da'esh. Such attacks have led to the deaths of unarmed civilians and other innocent people, which is a great source of concern. We need to step up regional and international efforts to combat that dangerous phenomenon, and to cut off the sources of financing to those terrorist groups.

We welcome the efforts of the Multinational Joint Task Force to combat the extremist terrorist groups and to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance. In that regard, it is important to mention the two presidential statements adopted by the Security Council in January 2017 (S/PRST/2017/2) and July 2017 (S/PRST/2017/10), which emphasize the importance of fighting transnational threats that undermine peace and security. The presidential statements also recall the importance of implementing the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and of strengthening good governance and the rule of law.

Secondly, the humanitarian situation in certain countries of the region is considered the second worst humanitarian crisis that has been recorded, with approximately 10.8 million people who require immediate humanitarian aid. Approximately 2.4 million people, including women and children, have been internally displaced. It is therefore essential to deal with the causes of the suffering and to pool international efforts and the work of regional organizations to strengthen the stability of the region and its people, along with those responsible for terrorist acts to be held accountable in accordance with resolution 2349 (2017), on the situation in the Lake Chad basin, adopted on 31 March 2017.

During their visit to the Lake Chad basin, the members of the Security Council had an opportunity to see the scope of the humanitarian disaster in some countries of the region. The Council should benefit from the visit and periodically review the very serious humanitarian situation facing those countries before it deteriorates even further. It would then be even more difficult to contain it at the international level, let alone at the regional level.

Thirdly, with regard to environmental challenges facing the region, resolution 2349 (2017) also emphasizes the need to address the root causes of climate challenge in the region and to increase international participation in order to reduce the negative effects of climate and environmental changes, including the scarcity of water, drought, desertification, land degradation and food insecurity. In that regard, we note the need to reassess risks and define new and serious strategies in order to assist the Governments of the region. The Governments concerned and the United Nations must extensively assess climate risks, contain their impact and minimize adverse effects of climate and environmental changes, so as to ensure stability in the region and to ease the humanitarian suffering of its people.

In conclusion, we would like to reaffirm the need for the Security Council to continue to examine humanitarian suffering in some countries of Lake Chad basin, with a view to improving the living conditions of the peoples facing humanitarian, security and climate challenges and minimize their risks. In that regard, we commend the efforts of the Republic of Nigeria to address those challenges.

Mr. Orrenius Skau (Sweden): Let me begin by thanking Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed for her briefing and her leadership. I am happy to note that Ambassador Skoog is with Amina in Monrovia to celebrate this important moment in the history of the country and to discuss how to support the priorities of the new Government in his capacity as the Peacebuilding Commission Chair for Liberia. Let me also thank Mr. Mohammed Bila of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and Ms. Chitra Nagarajan for sharing their important perspectives from the ground this morning.

It is with a deep sigh of relief that we welcome the safe return of more than 100 of the girls captured by Boko Haram in the Nigerian town of Dapchi. I reiterate our strong demand for the immediate and unconditional release of all remaining missing girls. Rehabilitation opportunities for children and their mothers, including the sensitization of communities to avoid stigmatization and to facilitate return, continue to be of the utmost importance in our ongoing efforts to address the situation.

National, regional and international efforts to mitigate the consequences of the Boko Haram insurgency and to step up humanitarian action in 2017 meant that we could successfully avert the immediate risk of famine. In that connection, we recognize the important efforts by the Multinational Joint Task Force and the Lake Chad Basin Commission. However, one year after our visit to the region and the adoption of resolution 2349 (2017), the situation remains one of the most fragile in the world. Continued international support and attention to this complex crisis is crucial.

Vast development needs in the region persist. Chronic poverty, the lack of economic opportunities and violations of human rights are all factors of instability. We need a continued focus on sustainable and inclusive growth, as well as on the empowerment of women.

Effective partnerships spanning the humanitarian, reconstruction and development nexus that combine short- and long-term responses are needed to support sustainable peace. In order to address the structural causes of the crisis, complementarity and cooperation must be sought with a multitude of actors, including national Governments, regional organizations and international financial institutions.

As part of the efforts to implement resolution 2349 (2017), Sweden is actively supporting the organization of the Lake Chad governors' forum on peacebuilding, prevention, stabilization and regional cooperation, due to take place in Maiduguri in May. The forum should contribute to the process of developing a regional stabilization strategy. Those efforts will also support coherence, coordination and cross-border collaboration by creating a forum for recurrent dialogue among governors from affected States and by conducting consultations with communities — including religious leaders and women representatives — on the challenges facing people living in the Lake Chad basin region.

In the light of today's focus on root causes, I wish to highlight two points in particular.

First, the negative impacts of climate change on the stability and security of the Lake Chad basin region have been clearly recognized by the Council — in resolution 2349 (2017) and in the January presidential statement (S/PRST/2018/3) on the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS). Climate change constitutes both a direct challenge and a threat multiplier, contributing to polarization and conflict between groups by worsening existing fragility factors, such as scarce resources, marginalization and the disruption of livelihoods.

As we have heard today, the Security Council has repeatedly emphasized the need for adequate capacity for risk assessments by the United Nations in that regard. We need to find ways to bring together existing information from relevant United Nations organs, including at the country level, and involve research institutions to provide forward-looking analysis for United Nations decision-making bodies, including for the Security Council. We invite the Secretary-General to take forward those Council requests forward. We stand ready to support any efforts in that regard. Conflict prevention efforts would be more effective if the climate and environmental stress put on societies is properly understood and addressed. Implementing the sustaining peace agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is, of course, a central part of those efforts.

Secondly, engaging all relevant actors, not least at the local level, in an inclusive dialogue on root causes is crucial. Community engagement is also a prerequisite for effective early-warning systems. In particular, women's full and equal representation and effective participation is critical in reconstruction and stabilization efforts, as they are often disproportionately affected by the crisis and play multiple roles in society. With greater influence for women in the design and implementation of policies and programmes, these will be better adapted to realities on the ground, thereby creating better conditions for long-term stability and peace.

Finally, we look forward to continuing to engage in discussions on the implementation of resolution 2349 (2017), including within the regular reporting by UNOWAS and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa. We encourage the Secretary-General to undertake a joint visit to the region with the World Bank, the African Union and the African Development Bank, as was encouraged in the resolution. I also agree with the United Kingdom that proposals put forward this morning by the briefers should be considered and taken forward. The Peacebuilding Commission could also be well placed in this regard, while drawing on its unique membership and a mandate to address root causes and take regional approaches. Continuous international attention to the Lake Chad basin region will be needed in order to find ways to address the multiple and interdependent challenges in a coherent manner, in the short-term as well as the long-term.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful to the presidency of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for the timely convening of this meeting on this special occasion as we celebrate World Water Day, a vital element for the well-being of human beings and the promotion of their economic and social development. We are also grateful to Ms. Amina Mohammed, Mr. Mohammed Bila and Ms. Chitra Nagarajan for their briefings.

Peru continues to be particularly concerned about the crisis in the Lake Chad basin, which affects more than 17 million people in Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and the Niger. Approximately 11 million people are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. We must also condemn and confront the terrorist violence of Boko Haram and Da'esh, and prevent the occurrence of major conflicts by addressing their root causes. That requires the timely promotion of socioeconomic development and the mitigation of the effects of climate change and environmental change. These effects involve water scarcity, which in turn has created chronic drought, desertification, land degradation, extreme poverty and food insecurity in the Lake Chad region. The situation highlights the interrelationship between security, development and human rights.

Building sustainable peace requires a coherent and comprehensive response, with a broad, multidimensional and multi-stakeholder approach. The United Nations system has the capacity to contribute to more effective responses through its relevant agencies, funds and programmes. The Security Council, the main body responsible for maintaining international peace and security, can and should benefit from a better understanding of the factors behind the crisis and conflict and the tools needed to address them. That should be done through timely situation analysis and development, risk assessments and risk-management strategies, as well as early-warning analysis and coordinated early-response mechanisms and the creation of integrated strategies aimed at preventing a recurrence of conflict. We welcome the efforts in that regard of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and regional and subregional organizations, such as the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States. We encourage them to increase their support to the Governments of the States of the Lake Chad region

around a holistic regional strategy designed to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and violent extremism.

That strategy should go beyond an urgent short-term military response and focus on long-term sustainable development focused on ensuring human dignity. That includes eradicating poverty and vulnerability to the negative effects of climate change. It also means creating jobs, especially for young people, and access to education, and strengthening Government institutions. In that context, we welcome the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan for north-eastern Nigeria.

In conclusion, we would like to point out the importance of ensuring that UNOWAS and UNOCA reports include special sections on the problems in Lake Chad and on their joint work. We would also like to stress the importance of adopting a gender perspective in investigations and data collection, with a view to proposing specific policies and programmes aimed at sustaining peace in the Lake Chad region.

Mr. Ma Zhaoxu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, China commends the initiative you have taken as President of the Security Council to convene today's open meeting. We thank Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, Mr. Mohammed Bila, representative of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, and Ms. Chitra Nagarajan, Senior Conflict Adviser of Adelphi, for their briefings.

In recent years we have seen African countries standing united and making concerted efforts to strengthen themselves, finding African solutions to African issues and developing more robust collective security mechanisms for the region. They have thereby not only strongly defended Africa's peace and security but have also contributed significantly to international peace and security. China applauds those efforts.

Meanwhile, Africa continues to face challenges to peace and security. In certain regions, including the Lake Chad basin, terrorist and violent extremist activities are still rampant. Transnational organized crimes such as drug smuggling and human trafficking continue to endanger the safety of the African people. As a result, the countries affected are suffering the effects of sluggish economic growth, along with persistent serious unemployment, poverty and refugee issues. It is therefore imperative that the international community take concrete measures to help Africa build its capacity to ensure peace and security.

First, the international community must firmly support Africa in its fight against the terrorist threats. Counter-terrorism in Africa is an integral part of the global counter-terrorism effort. The international community must uphold common counter-terrorism standards and support Africa's anti-terrorism efforts. The United Nations must provide tangible assistance to African countries in their anti-terrorism capacity-building so that their counter-terrorism efforts are more effective. China commends the fact that the countries of the Lake Chad basin and the Sahel have assumed ownership of the issue and have been working jointly for peace by actively combating regional terrorist threats. While maintaining respect for the sovereignty and wishes of host countries, the United Nations and the international community should provide targeted assistance to countries of the region in areas such as technology, training, equipment, logistics and financial support.

Secondly, we should give Africa effective assistance in addressing the root causes of conflict. The continent's hotspot issues are a mass of intertwined national, ethnic, religious and social issues. African countries have two big jobs to do — maintaining peace and security, on the one hand, and promoting revitalization and development, on the other, and to do that they must address both the root causes and the symptoms. While it is important to resolve the ongoing peace and security challenges, it is even more important to address their root causes from a long-term perspective. This means in particular that support and assistance should be provided to African countries, including those in the Lake Chad basin, in their efforts to reduce poverty and increase employment, with the aim of improving economic and social development levels, delivering a tangible peace dividend to their peoples, and rooting out breeding grounds of conflict and extremism.

Thirdly, the unique role of regional organizations should be actively brought to bear. The African Union (AU) and other regional and subregional organizations in Africa have an intimate knowledge of regional and national realities and have long been mediating complex regional hotspot issues, leveraging their unique geographic, historical and cultural advantages. It is therefore important to ensure that the international community fully respects African countries' ownership in resolving their own security concerns, deepens coordination with countries in the Lake Chad basin and regional and subregional organizations such as

the AU, the Economic Community of West African States and the Lake Chad Basin Commission, and enhances cooperation with them in areas such as conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction.

China and Africa are a community with a shared future, as well as a community of shared interests and win-win cooperation Strengthening solidarity and cooperation with African countries remains a key foundation of China's foreign policy. As a good friend, brother and partner of the continent, China will continue to act on the principles of sincerity, practical results, affinity and good faith that guide China's Africa policy, as well as on the values of friendship, justice and shared interests, both articulated by President Xi Jinping, and it will firmly support Africa's peace and development efforts. In September, China will host a Beijing summit forum on China-Africa cooperation, focusing on China and Africa's joint efforts to build the Belt and Road Initiative and on the China-Africa Community of a Shared Future. We will work hard to ensure that the Belt and Road Initiative is aligned with the development strategies of African countries, the AU's Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, so as to create greater benefits for the peoples of Africa and bring peace, stability and development to the African continent as soon as possible.

Last but not least, I would like to stress that as always, China will continue to stand together with all the developing countries of Africa. We will always be sincere friends and reliable partners of Africa.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking the Netherlands for taking the initiative to organize this vital debate on the relationship between water and peace and security in the Lake Chad region, which is a very high priority for France. I warmly thank Amina Mohammed, the Deputy Secretary-General; Mr. Mohammed Bila, representative of the Lake Chad Basin Commission; and Ms. Chitra Nagarajan, the representative of Adelphi, for their very important and enlightening briefings. I am also pleased to welcome the representative of Nigeria.

The development of the Lake Chad region requires first and foremost a focus on security, which is an essential, if not sufficient, prerequisite for development. France therefore actively supports the efforts of the countries of the Lake Chad basin region, united in the Multinational Joint Task Force against Boko Haram. Their joint efforts have made it possible to gain ground and to record major gains against that terrorist organization.

Nevertheless, the terrorist threat continues to loom over the countries of the region and their peoples, as shown by the tragic toll taken by the many attacks carried out during recent months against both civilians and security forces. We were deeply shocked by the kidnapping of 110 schoolgirls in Dapchi last month, but were pleased to hear this week that a large number of them had been released. We also condemn yesterday's attack on Nigerian soldiers in the Birnin Guari region. But these, unfortunately, are but a few examples. We also denounce in the strongest terms the grave human rights violations committed against children, particularly their recruitment as child soldiers and their use as human bombs, which could constitute crimes under the Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Faced with the persistent, ever-changing terrorist scourge, the support of the international community is more needed than ever and must continue. Such support includes certain responsibilities. Under no circumstances can the fight against terrorism be accompanied by human rights violations. The activities of the Multinational Joint Task Force must respect the relevant provisions of international law. We welcome the efforts of the countries of the region to bring former terrorist fighters to trial and to take measures to promote their reintegration. The rule of law is essential for reconciliation and for the demobilization of people who in many cases had joined terrorist groups without any real ideological motivation.

We are aware that the response to the crisis in the Lake Chad Basin region cannot focus only on security. In order to ensure a lasting solution, we must continue our efforts to address the root causes of the crisis through an integrated response. That was the key lesson learned from the Security Council mission to the area a year ago, and it is this integrated approach, which encompasses security, development and human rights, that is enshrined in resolution 2349 (2017), adopted last March, and in the January statement by the President of the Security Council (S/PRST/2018/3).

Today the Lake Chad region faces major challenges. The surface of the lake has decreased by half since the 1950s, and its fertile environment attracts neighbouring peoples and subjects the area to strong demographic pressure. The situation is worsening, which is having

lasting impacts on local economic activities such as agriculture and fishing.

Food insecurity, competition for water, and social tensions threaten both host communities and displaced persons and could lead to heightened regional conflicts. As today is World Water Day, I wish to stress the importance of water resources to the security and stability of the Lake Chad region. Water should never be a source of division but, rather, a factor for cooperation between States. This is one of the major challenges facing our generation.

Against that backdrop, France will continue its efforts to strengthen local governance tools, including the Lake Chad Basin Commission, as well as its development assistance projects, through the French Development Agency in particular.

Lastly, I would like to recall that our efforts to stabilize the region must also focus on humanitarian challenges and the protection of civilians.

First, the major humanitarian emergency that the region continues to face must lead us to strengthen our efforts to support the countries on the front line of the fight against terrorism and that are hosting a considerable number of internally displaced persons and refugees. The severity of the humanitarian crisis that the countries of the Lake Chad Basin are experiencing today requires the mobilization of all stakeholders, in particular through support for the humanitarian response plan for the region recently launched by the United Nations. France has taken concrete steps to that end. It provided €14.5 million in humanitarian assistance in 2017 and contributed to the implementation of the Lake Chad Initiative, aimed at empowering displaced persons and refugees, for a total contribution by France of more than €36 million.

Secondly, the fight against terrorism must be accompanied by a continued requirement to protect civilians. We must ensure the ongoing safety of peoples from Boko Haram and support the voluntary and lasting return of displaced persons and refugees where security conditions allow it possible. The issue of refugee and displaced women must also be met with specific and immediate responses, and women should be fully consulted to that end.

I would like to close by recalling the need to break down the barriers between the issues of sustainable development, governance, human rights, and peace and security. Environmental deterioration and in particular the increasingly scant water resources in the Lake Chad region illustrate with particular clarity the imperative need for a comprehensive approach to conflict prevention, which lies at the heart of the reform strategy of the Secretary-General and which we fully support. Conflict prevention is one of the major challenges of our time, and its importance will only increase in the years to come.

In this regard, in accordance with resolution 2349 (2017) and the January presidential statement on West Africa and the Sahel (S/PRST/2018/3), we encourage the adoption by Governments and the United Nations system of appropriate risk assessment and management strategies so as to respond to the destabilizing factors linked to environmental deterioration, desertification and climate change.

In the Lake Chad region, we must urgently move from words to action. Commitments must translate into specific actions; rest assured of France's resolute commitment to that end.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I would like to start by thanking the presidency of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for having organized this important briefing on the situation in the Lake Chad basin, building on what the Security Council did last year. I wish to express appreciation to Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed for her comprehensive briefing and for her leadership and commitment in addressing the multifaceted challenges facing the Lake Chad basin in a comprehensive and holistic manner. Let me also thank Mr. Mohammed Bila and Ms. Chitra Nagarajan for their remarks.

I wish also to acknowledge the presence here today of the Permanent Representative of Nigeria, our colleague, whose country has been doing so much to fight Boko Haram terrorism.

It has been a year since the Security Council's visit to the Lake Chad basin and the unanimous adoption of resolution 2349 (2017). We want to believe that the issue of peace and security there, as well as the humanitarian and socioeconomic problems facing the region, are now attracting greater international attention. Momentum appears to have been created, as the Deputy Secretary-General said earlier.

We appreciate the progress made in the fight against Boko Haram, which continues to pose a major threat to

peace and security in the region. In this regard, it is important to recognize the efforts of the countries of the region, through their participation in the Multinational Joint Task Force. Unfortunately, the Joint Task Force is not receiving the necessary international support it so richly deserves. The withdrawal of the Chadian troops from the Joint Task Force in the Niger and its impact cannot be taken lightly. We note the decision taken at the latest African Union Summit to request that the African Union Commission work closely with partners to continue mobilizing additional support for the Joint Task Force on the basis of the need expressed by the countries of the region. It is absolutely important that the pledges already made by partners in support of the Joint Force be fulfilled.

The cooperation and coordination of efforts among the United Nations, the African Union and the subregional organizations of the Economic Community of West African States and the Economic Community of Central African States is very critical in addressing the challenges of the region. The visit by the African Union Peace and Security Council to the Lake Chad basin in July 2017 and the holding of the first regional stabilization conference for the Lake Chad basin region in November last year are encouraging developments in that regard.

We believe that a security and military response, as well as development interventions aimed at addressing the root causes of conflict and tackling poverty by overcoming the unemployment problem, must be strengthened. In that connection, widespread food insecurity, forced displacement, climate change and chronic vulnerability and susceptibility to epidemics that are affecting the people of the region cannot be addressed without enhanced and sustained ergagement and support on the part of the international community. Accordingly, we support the 2018 United Nations humanitarian response plan for north-eas: Nigeria, launched last month, which covers peacebuilding and ensures efforts that contribute to lcnger-term development measures.

The effects of climate change and its mpact on the Lake Chad basin, including the degradation of ecosystems, pose serious challenges to the efforts in addressing the root causes of the conflicts in the basin. The populations in the area highly depend on agriculture, animal husbandry and fishing, which are tied to the life and very existence of the ake. That climate change is wreaking havoc in many areas of the world is increasingly becoming self-evident, but nowhere is that so empirically more demonstrable than in the Lake Chad basin. On top of that, the Boko Haram threat continues unabated. Therefore, the consolidation of peace and the progressive stabilization of the region to allow economic activities in the joint border areas of the countries are essential and need to be supported. The enhanced and sustained support of the United Nations system in a coherent and coordinated manner will continue to be critical in assisting countries of the region to overcome those challenges.

Ms. Tachco (United States of America): I would also like to thank Deputy Secretary-General Mohammed, Mr. Bila and Ms. Nagarajan for their briefings today. One year after the Security Council's mission to the region and its adoption of resolution 2349 (2017), the presentations are an important reminder that much work remains to be done to address the continuing terrorist threat and the escalating humanitarian crisis in the Lake Chad basin.

One year later, we can point to some progress in the humanitarian response and efforts to deliver help to those in the greatest need. But the terror of Boko Haram and its offshoot Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS)-West Africa continues to devastate communities, families and lives throughout the region. Their brutality, hatred and inhumanity will spread terror, prolong the humanitarian crisis and displace millions until they are destroyed. We express our deep condolences to the victims of the horrific terrorist attacks in north-east Nigeria and across the Lake Chad region, including the attack and tragic kidnapping of over 100 school girls in Dapchi and the abduction and killing of humanitarian aid workers in Raan.

We are encouraged by the return of a significant number of the girls to Dapchi yesterday, but are horrified to hear of those killed during their captivity. We call for the return of all those abducted across the region and accountability for the perpetrators. As the United States has told the Governments of the Lake Chad region many times, we are their partner in the fight and we will continue to support their efforts to defeat those terrorist groups.

We commend Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, the Niger and Benin for stepping up to counter that threat through the Multinational Joint Task Force. We thank Nigeria for the leadership role it has played in the response and we urge those nations to stay focused on the task,

even while they face other pressing security priorities. Governments must also focus on a smooth transition between military forces and civilian protection forces to ensure that populations are protected even after troops move on. Regional leaders must redouble efforts to secure territory to allow the displaced to return safely to their communities, restart their livelihoods and rebuild their lives.

The latest abductions in Dapchi and Raan show the need for robust protection to end the appeal of abductions and extortion and the cycle of rape, forced marriage, brainwashing and suicide bombings. Nigeria's recently launched demobilization, disassociation, reintegration and reconciliation strategy and the action plan for preventing and countering violent extremism are very positive steps, as are other similar regional efforts. The United States will continue supporting that critical work and we encourage partners to do so as well.

As our briefers and Council colleagues have described here today, success will not depend on military effectiveness on the battlefield alone. It also requires improvements to the economy and governance off the battlefield. The region cannot simply restore north-east Nigeria and the broader Lake Chad basin to what they were before the destruction caused by Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa. They must build a better future there. Governments must work with civic leaders and a wide range of community leaders to create the social, economic and political infrastructure to support lasting peace. That progress must include transparent and credible investigations of human rights violations and abuses, as well as mechanisms to hold those responsible accountable for their actions. Impunity only fuels terrorist recruitment. We therefore reiterate the call in resolution 2349 (2017) for all regional security forces to conduct operations in line with international human rights and humanitarian law and for Governments to take appropriate action to secure justice and accountability. Those efforts deepen people's trust in their Governments and strengthen security efforts.

The staggering size and toll of the region's continuing humanitarian crisis require a dynamic and comprehensive response that helps respond to urgent needs, while looking ahead to the future. The response must lay the groundwork for durable solutions for the more than 10 million people throughout the region needing humanitarian assistance, the 4.5 million facing severe food insecurity and the many still at risk of famine, as well as the 2 million displaced. A successful response depends on access to the communities in need throughout the regions. We reiterate calls on regional Governments to do all they can to help humanitarian partners secure that access. Regional Governments should also do more to bolster grassroots support for the international humanitarian response by reinstituting responsive governance in the region and reassuring the region's people that they have a future in their home communities.

The United States is committed to supporting our Lake Chad partners in their efforts to defeat the terrorists, address the root causes of violent extremism, provide life-saving assistance to those in need, create a secure environment so that the displaced can voluntarily and safely return home and rebuild communities ravaged by conflict. Our bilateral security assistance provides vital support to our Lake Chad basin partners in the fight against Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa, as well as to help those who have been victims of those terrorist groups. The United States is also the single-largest humanitarian donor to the international humanitarian response. On 6 March, the United States announced more than $128 million in additional humanitarian assistance for the Lake Chad region, bringing the total to over $655 million since 2017, and over $1 billion since 2015.

The United States is also helping regional partners rebuild devastated communities. To help establish civilian security, the United States trained civilian law enforcement actors, provides personal protective equipment to police and rebuilds police barracks and stations. Throughout the region, when security conditions allow, we fund education, health and agriculture projects in a holistic effort to kick-start local economies, help establish effective governance and service delivery and foster respect for human rights and accountability for violations and abuses. With our fellow Council members, we stand with the people and the partner Governments of the Lake Chad basin committed to this effort.

Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): Côte d'Ivoire would like to thank Ms. Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General, for her briefing. Our thanks also go to Mr. Mohammed Bila, representative of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, and Ms. Chitra Nagarajan, Senior Conflict Adviser of Adelphi, for their information and suggestions.

In putting the issue of the Lake Chad basin on the agenda for today's meeting, the presidency has encouraged the international community to consider this complex and multidimensional crisis with the aim of investigating its underlying and interdependent causes, for which we thank you, Sir. The fact is that beyond the security crisis in the region, there are several other interrelated factors, such as socioeconomic and environmentally related poverty, affecting the populations living in the Lake Chad basin. In this case, the problem is one of increasingly scarce natural and economic resources, a lack of jobs and sources of income, especially for young people, and issues of governance and administrative decentralization. In considering these factors as the main causes of the crisis, the Security Council addressed the situation comprehensively in resolution 2349 (2017). While welcoming the efforts of the Governments concerned, the Council has also urged them to effectively implement programmes aimed at building and sustaining peace, as well as tackling the root causes of the crisis.

My country believes that the key priorities are ensuring equitable access for the people of the region to resources and services, together with sustainable economic growth. We therefore commend the Security Council's determination to work to restore an atmosphere of peace in the region with a view to enabling those priorities to be implemented. The Secretary-General's report contained in document S/2017/764 has given us some insight into the actions being taken to deal with the threat posed to the region by the terrorist group Boko Haram in particular.

My delegation is pleased with the success of the Multinational Joint Task Force's operations, despite the fact that Boko Haram is still active and dangerous. In that regard, we welcome the recommendations made at the second meeting of the Joint Steering Committee of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the African Union, held from 18 to 20 December of last year, particularly concerning the importance of speeding up the process for making additional support available through the use of funds from international partners in order to meet the urgent Joint Task Force's operational needs. The humanitarian aspect of the crisis in the region also remains worrying and will require the Governments of the region and the international community to synergize their efforts to provide assistance to the populations in distress.

Côte d'Ivoire appreciates the Secretary-General's determination and commitment to support the countries of the region in their efforts to end the ongoing violence and mitigate the people's suffering. We continue to believe that only greater cooperation at the regional and international levels will enable lasting solutions to the crisis to be found while taking into account the specifics of the individual countries concerned. In that regard, my delegation backs the Secretary-General's willingness to commit the United Nations and its partners to advancing the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel in order to comprehensively address the relevant security and development issues, including in the Lake Chad basin. It is also important to continue and strengthen the coordination of the United Nations and African Union efforts, as well as the cooperation between the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, in order to address the challenges in the region of the Lake Chad basin.

One of the biggest challenges in the region continues to be the collective commitment to initiating genuinely dynamic development in the area of the Lake Chad basin. While that certainly means a greater commitment to combating the terrorist groups, it also depends on devising a strategy for finding a solution to the shrinking of Lake Chad, the epicenter of every socioeconomic activity for the peoples of the area. Considering the drastic drop in the lake's depth and area, it will be crucial to speed up the quest for innovative ways to restore it. In that regard, we welcome the conclusions and recommendations of the international conference held in Abuja from 25 to 28 February on the theme of saving Lake Chad to revitalize the basin's ecosystem for sustainable livelihood, security and development.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire would like to affirm its commitment, together with the other members of the Council, to contributing to resolving the current crisis in the Lake Chad basin, once again emphasizing the importance of strengthening the coordination mechanisms for the relevant subregional and regional organizations in order to ensure that their joint actions are effective.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed for her informative briefing on the situation in the region of the Lake Chad basin. We also listened to the other briefers' reports on the subject with interest.

For our part, we want to emphasize that the topic of today's meeting appears to be "Peace and security in Africa". It would therefore be logical to assume that we in the Security Council, in accordance with our mandate under the Charter of the United Nations and in the context of our consideration of the situation in the Lake Chad Basin region, will focus directly on the deplorable security situation.

We are not arguing with the fact that there is a whole range of diverse problems that are undoubtedly exacerbating the overall situation in the region. The climate and habitat naturally have a serious impact on people's lives. However, there are other, more suitable, forums for discussing these issues — the Second Committee of the General Assembly, and the Economic and Social Council. There is no need to disrupt the existing division of responsibilities and overload the Security Council's agenda. Any erosion of its mandate, and the consequent diminution of its effectiveness, must be guarded against.

By the way, we warned that this was potentially an issue when we voted on resolution 2349 (2017) last year, and we were not the only ones. We were not listened to at the time and, unfortunately, the resolution did not include the elements that would have helped to make it an effective tool for international efforts to assist the countries of the Lake Chad basin, particularly in the area of counter-terrorism. I would like to stress that what we are talking about is fighting terrorism, not some conflict or other. In the relevant Security Council resolution, Boko Haram is classified as a terrorist organization.

So where are we today, a year after the adoption of resolution 2349 (2017)? So far, Boko Haram still seems to feel entirely untrammelled. It has continued to commit terrorist acts and kidnap schoolgirls in the region, with regard to which the Council very recently issued another presidential statement (S/PRST/2018/3). Thank heaven that today we were informed that a large number of them have been released. Yet we were also shocked by the news of the possible tragic fate of the rest. We are grateful to the Nigerian authorities for their counter-terrorism efforts in this regard.

Boko Haram's terrorist activity is a real threat to the States of the region. It undermines people's settled lives, forces them to move to less dangerous areas and interferes with normal commercial and economic activity. Only when this challenge to an entire region is eliminated will it be possible to make significant progress in resolving other pressing problems and to undertake thorough efforts to prevent natural disasters and do away with their consequences.

In this regard, I cannot help recalling the disastrous extent of the destabilization in the region after the collapse of the Libyan State. Far from normalizing things in Libya, which we were discussing only yesterday (see S/PV.8211), it has continued to have a negative impact on the regional situation. I am not saying that in order to irritate anyone on the Council. It is a warning against undertaking such destructive regional ventures in future. After 2011, terrorism spread across the Sahel-Sahara region and West and Central Africa like a cancer and, despite every effort, it has continued to threaten the stability of countries in that part of Africa and even beyond its borders. Unfortunately, we will be forced to wrestle with the consequences of the externally inflicted crisis in Libya, which include uncontrolled and illegal flows of arms and migrants and the spread of radical ideologies, for a long time to come.

In that regard, we consider it important to continue to provide all possible assistance to countries that are fighting terrorists in strengthening their own national potential and encouraging the development of solid regional cooperation. In this area, what is needed is cohesion, not competition, and a good example of that is the activities of the Multinational Joint Task Force of the States of the Lake Chad basin, which are doing a great deal to curtail Boko Haram's activities. We understand that security efforts should go hand in hand with advancing policies aimed at strengthening the institutions of State power and socioeconomic development. We note the efforts in that regard of the countries of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the holding of a first conference on stabilizing the situation in the countries of the region. Efforts to find answers to the current problems based on the notion of African solutions to African problems can only be welcomed.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that Russia, as before, will continue to provide assistance to the States of the region both through international institutions and bilateral channels, without making our help conditional on any politically loaded demands.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed for the

information that she has provided us with today. We also express our gratitude for the briefings by Ms. Chitra Nagarajan, Senior Conflict Adviser of Adelphi, and by Mr. Mohammed Bila, representative of the Lake Chad Basin Commission. We would like to highlight the Commission's work in developing mechanisms to address the crisis in the region, including its root causes.

Bolivia is concerned about the continuing threat posed by Boko Haram to security in the Lake Chad basin, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in the region. This terrorist group's terrible attacks on civilians, including assassinations, kidnappings, the use of children as suicide bombers, sexual violence against women and the recruitment of children, underscore the continuing importance of coordinating efforts to deal with its extreme violence. We recognize that the tireless efforts of Nigeria, the Niger, Chad and Cameroon have enabled us to make encouraging progress in reducing the terrorist group's fighting capacity, but we must continue to counter the terrorist acts that threaten peace and security in the region. We therefore consider that the international community's support is crucially important to the Multinational Joint Task Force and the countries of the region that are combating terrorism on behalf of us all.

The region is currently facing a grave humanitarian crisis, with more than 10 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. That reality must make us focus our attention and commitment on uniting the efforts of the States of the Lake Chad basin and regional and subregional organizations, with a short-term focus on combating food insecurity, addressing the basic needs of internally displaced persons, refugees and those most vulnerable, such as children and women, and improving the general population's quality of life by providing access to basic services. We therefore encourage donor countries to honour their pledges made at the 2017 Oslo Humanitarian Conference on Nigeria and the Lake Chad Region and make it possible for those needs to be met.

The Plurinational State of Bolivia recognizes the importance of developing a joint regional strategy that takes into account the underlying causes of the crisis in the region as well as initiatives to combat the threat posed by Boko Haram. We note that the Governments of the countries concerned are facing complex challenges in implementing programmes addressing the root causes of the crisis, primarily because a large part of their resources are earmarked for the security sector. It will be crucial to work to reduce poverty and social, political, economic and gender-based inequalities, and to increase countries' ability to provide basic services, education and infrastructure. We must also consider the adverse consequences of climate change and ecological changes. In that context, water shortages, desertification and drought are increasing instability in the region.

As we said in last year's meeting on preventive diplomacy and transboundary waters (see S/PV.7959), during Bolivia's June presidency of the Security Council, a high percentage of the world's freshwater sources are shared by two or more States. Water quality, use and scarcity can often generate conflicts or the conditions for potential conflicts. But States that share this life-sustaining resource must translate those ties into opportunities to cooperate effectively so that they can work inclusively to share their knowledge in order to foster consensus and identify more efficient and cooperative water-management policies. In that regard, it is essential that the various bodies of the United Nations, based on their respective mandates, redouble their efforts to jointly address that issue together with the parties concerned.

In conclusion, we believe that it will be crucial to provide continued coordination and support to the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the Economic Community of Central African States in encouraging them to redouble their efforts and in working together with them.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): At the outset, I would like to thank today's briefers, Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, Mr. Mohammed Bila and Ms. Chitra Nagarajan, for their very comprehensive statements. I also thank the President for convening today's meeting to discuss the situation in the Lake Chad basin region.

Poland has been closely following the political and security situation in this region, which is facing a dreadful humanitarian crisis, with about 11 million people in need of immediate assistance and more than 2 million dealing with internal displacement, particularly women and children. We believe that the Security Council should remain thoroughly engaged and monitor the situation carefully.

We support the full implementation of resolution 2349 (2017). We firmly condemn all terrorist attacks, violations of international humanitarian law and human

rights abuses by Boko Haram and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham in the region, including those involving killings and other violence against civilians, especially women and children. In that regard, we appreciate the Multinational Joint Task Force counter-terrorism operations aimed at ending the Boko Haram insurgency. However, there remains much to be done in that regard, since a number of terrorist attacks have shown that the group remains a significant threat, especially in north-eastern Nigeria.

In order to end the terrorist threat in the Lake Chad basin region, the United Nations, together with the countries concerned, must address the root causes of the violence and instability there, which originate in the social and economic hardships endured by marginalized communities. If we do not tackle these issues, we will not be able to strengthen prevention and ensure that the conflicts can be sustainably resolved. Only by empowering the region's marginalized populations, including women, children and other communities that suffer from discrimination, can we effectively counter the spread of violent extremism. At this stage, humanitarian assistance alone is not enough to ensure stable and sustainable livelihoods for the people affected. Long-term development assistance must address the vulnerabilities of the region, including food insecurity and climate change.

Climate change is a global threat facing all of us today. It hinders access to resources and causes extreme weather events, disasters, food insecurity and water shortages. All of those factors can lead to the escalation of local and regional conflicts and increases in migration. Poland recognizes the devastating consequences that climate change and ecological degradation, among other factors, are having on the stability of the region, and we are aware of the importance of increased international engagement in addressing these problems.

As we celebrate World Water Day and the launch of the International Decade for Action: Water for sustainable development (2018-2028), we would like to stress the important role of water in the peace and security agenda. We must address the adverse effects that water, or the lack of it, can produce and the challenges it can pose, and pay more attention to the importance of adequate risk assessment and management. While concentrating on conflict prevention and sustaining peace, we should not forget Sustainable Development Goal 6, as we have already seen several water-related crises. We therefore welcome regional initiatives aimed at improving the situation in the Lake Chad basin, revitalizing local ecosystems and supporting sustainable livelihoods.

As President of the twenty-fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Poland will continue to lead climate negotiations in the spirit of the Paris Climate Change Agreement, ensuring the equal participation of all countries and inclusive and transparent negotiations, while bearing in mind that resolving climate-security issues is in the interest of countries vulnerable to climate change. Effective adaptation to and mitigation of climate change can also be perceived as conflict-prevention tools that can make a significant contribution to building resilience among the countries affected.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I sincerely thank you, Sir, for including today's very important issue in your programme of work, enabling us to discuss the situation in the Lake Chad basin region for the first time this year and give greater visibility to a serious crisis that has received very little media attention.

We also thank Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, Mr. Mohammed Bila, representative of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, and Ms. Chitra Nagarajan, Senior Conflict Adviser at Adelphi, for their briefings, which underscored the severity of the situation in the Lake Chad basin region and its relationship to peace and security in Africa, in particular in Central and West Africa. The violent activities of the armed terrorist group Boko Haram in north-eastern Nigeria affect Nigeria's neighbours in the Lake Chad basin — Cameroon, Chad and the Niger — with devastating implications for food security and livelihoods. Boko Haram's acts of terrorism have killed more than 15,000 people in the region, led to the displacement of another 2.5 million in those four countries and hindered access to land and farming activities, which in turn has resulted in enormous humanitarian deprivation in a region already plagued by food insecurity, poverty and environmental degradation.

The emergence of terrorist groups such as Boko Haram and other non-State actors that operate outside the law, undermining States' sovereignty and exploiting their vulnerabilities, is both a cause and effect of the

factors I just mentioned. This situation is particularly apparent on our continent and we commend the Council for the initiatives it has already undertaken to address it. However, we must remain vigilant and take preventive and proactive measures to explore all of the variables that play a role in the peace and security equation in the region.

The Lake Chad basin is facing a complex humanitarian situation in north-eastern Nigeria, the far northern region of Cameroon, western Chad and south-eastern Niger. In the areas of those countries that are worst affected, conflict and displacement are compounding the other structural factors that undermine people's livelihoods, exacerbate food insecurity and poverty and reduce access to basic social services such as water, sanitation, health and education. There is no need to cite all the statistics, but according to several reports, about 11 million people are extremely vulnerable and in need of humanitarian assistance.

As many representatives underscored at the international conference on saving Lake Chad to revitalize the basin's ecosystem for sustainable livelihood, security and development — held from 26 to 28 February in Abuja — Lake Chad, part of the common heritage of humankind, is testament to the fact that global warming is closely linked to food insecurity and instability. Climate change, exacerbated by inefficient management of water resources over the years, has shrunk the surface of Lake Chad by 90 per cent in the past 40 years. The fact that the lake has dried up and now contains only 10 per cent of its previously normal volume of water, added to the resulting acute food shortage, has created many security and peace crises in the region.

The Council's unanimous adoption of resolution 2349 (2017) in March of last year testified to its resolute and firm decision to support regional efforts to combat the Boko Haram terrorist movement, resolve the humanitarian crisis and eliminate the root causes of the particularly difficult situation in which the Lake Chad basin finds itself. The dual security and humanitarian crisis there is putting us to the test in adopting a truly integrated and comprehensive approach to the region's multidimensional challenges. The problems facing the region, which range from terrorism, the illegal trade in arms and the trafficking and abduction of people to food insecurity, climate change and environmental degradation, cannot be solved in isolation from one another.

Equatorial Guinea would like to commend the praiseworthy efforts of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the African Union and, in particular, the Multinational Joint Task Force, which have made significant progress in their struggle to recover territory captured by Boko Haram, and which have thereby shown that African regional and subregional organizations can play a very active role in such contexts. The supranational structures of the Joint Task Force's configuration and the Group of Five for the Sahel have also been instrumental in regional efforts to eradicate violence in the area. A coordinated regional approach to the crisis is fundamental to achieving the results we want.

However, the security gains must be accompanied by support for development, with a focus on emergency assistance with food production — in agriculture, livestock and fisheries — while addressing the factors creating instability in the region. Meeting immediate needs will pave the way for the medium- and long-term activities that can help to improve the resilience of the population.

I would like to conclude by underscoring and expressing our appreciation for the great determination of the Governments of Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and the Niger to combat Boko Haram.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the Netherlands.

With its adoption of resolution 2349 (2017) on the Lake Chad basin a year ago, the Council recognized that security, development and human rights are interlinked. It also recognized that such links are vital to achieving an effective and comprehensive approach to stabilization, reconciliation and counter-terrorism. However, we must also strengthen preventive action.

The current crisis in the Lake Chad basin is the result of our collective inaction in addressing the root causes of the problem 15 years ago. Let me highlight that fact by focusing on three root causes about which we are particularly concerned in this context. The first is water and climate change; the second, socioeconomic challenges; and the third is a lack of inclusion and empowerment of women.

With regard to the first of these, water and climate, Secretary-General Guterres has said that water, peace and security are inextricably linked. He is absolutely right. As others have said, today is World Water Day.

That is another reason that I want to highlight the example of the availability of water and the challenges posed by the increased variability of the climate around Lake Chad. Those two factors have real effects on livelihoods, farming, fishing and food security, as Mr. Bila so eloquently said earlier today. Building resilience, with a view to preventing further tensions, requires investment in sustainable, integrated water management, all while taking into account the effects of climate change.

This month, the High-level Panel on Water, of which the Prime Minister of the Netherlands is an active member, presented its report, *Making Every Drop Count*. I would like to highlight some of its recommendations. We should address, first, the adverse impacts and challenges that water can cause; secondly, the need for adequate risk assessment and management solutions; thirdly, water-related root causes; and fourthly, we should take pre-emptive action. Those recommendations are crucial to both water scarcity and climate change.

The second root cause that we want to highlight is the lack of socioeconomic opportunities, which makes the population vulnerable to recruitment by violent extremists, as Ms. Nagarajan made clear earlier. The region itself has risen to address that challenge, and we commend it for that. The Multinational Joint Task Force, which brings together Benin, Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria, has pushed back Boko Haram and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. I pay tribute to their efforts, and I welcome the presence of our colleagues from those countries with us today. However, more must be done to address the underlying factors that drive people towards violent extremism. The recent joint United Nations mission is a good first step in developing conflict-sensitive programming across the United Nations system to improve socioeconomic opportunities. We call on the United Nations to strengthen that approach and to improve reporting on such efforts to the Security Council.

That brings me to the third root cause that I would like to address, the lack of inclusion and empowerment of women. Women and girls in the Lake Chad region are disproportionately affected as targets of terrorism and by lost livelihoods. As Ms. Nagarajan made clear, in such challenging situations, the most vulnerable become even more vulnerable. But women are also strong actors in building resilience and in advancing sustainable development in the region. We need an integrated response that ensures the full inclusion and participation of women and girls as stewards of their own futures.

Let me continue with the following call to action. To ensure a more integrated long-term approach to sustaining peace in the Lake Chad region, we are asking the United Nations for the following efforts. First, we need integrated risk assessment, conflict analysis and early warning. Secondly, we need more capacity for joint risk assessments and management by all United Nations organizations. Thirdly, we need to take climate change into account. Fourthly, we need to ensure conflict-, gender- and climate-sensitive planning and programming, such as stabilization plans that take into account the availability of resources around Lake Chad. Fifthly, we need comprehensive evaluations and reports in order to thoroughly analyse the many risks to peace and security and their effects on other programmes in the region. The upcoming report of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel will provide a good opportunity for putting that into practice. Lastly, we need to apply the lessons of the Lake Chad basin and the need for preventive action to other regions.

In conclusion, with its adoption of resolution 2349 (2017) the Security Council showed its ability to call for early action in the Lake Chad region. However, the Lake Chad basin is not unique. The root causes of conflict are visible in many places in the world. We want resolution 2349 (2017) to be the rule, not an exception, so that the Council can take preventive action for future generations.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I would like to once again encourage all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously.

I now give the floor to the representative of Nigeria.

Mr. Muhammad Bande (Nigeria): Allow me at the outset, on behalf of the Governments of Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria, to thank the presidency of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for organizing this important briefing. It is illustrative of the positive disposition of the Netherlands, and indeed that of the Security Council, towards resolving the myriad of challenges confronting the Lake Chad region.

Our special appreciation goes to Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed for her remarks. We thank Mr. Bila and Ms. Nagarajan for their briefings. We also thank all the memebrs of the Council for their statements.

The Boko Haram insurgency has negatively impacted virtually every facet of human endeavour, including the economy, the polity and the lives and livelihoods of people across the Lake Chad region. The insurgency has been met with resolve and resilience by the Multinational Joint Task Force, among others, and as a result we have continued to witness the emergence of rescued survivors and victims who were hitherto under the brutal oppression of Boko Haram. Indeed, three days ago we celebrated the release of 105 out of 110 abducted Dapchi schoolgirls. Nigeria is committed to rescuing the remaining victims, as well as those who were abducted earlier.

May I seize this opportunity to reiterate the commitment of our Governments to the protection of civilians in armed conflict, in recognition of the primary responsibility of States to protect civilians within their national jurisdiction. This conviction underlies our Governments' resolve to take all measures necessary to protect civilians in the battle against the terrorist group Boko Haram and its ilk.

That progress notwithstanding, we are aware of other challenges in the region, including climate, ecological and environmental changes, particularly the shrinking of Lake Chad. Averting the latter will require dedicated international intervention to recharge the lake. The lake is very dear to our hearts, as it is a source of livelihood to over 45 million people living in the region. It is one of the oldest lakes in Africa and is shared by Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria.

The people living in the region depend on Lake Chad for agriculture, fisheries, livestock production and, indeed, their economic well-being. Unfortunately, today all that is history due to the drying up of the lake. This has resulted in dire consequences for our peoples. Fish varieties are long gone, leaving the fishermen jobless; farmers and herdsmen struggle over the little water that is left; herdsmen traverse long distances in search of greener pastures, resulting in conflicts; and our young people are joining terrorist groups because of difficult economic conditions. The net effect of all these has been instability in the subregion. We therefore reiterate our call for rededicated international action, increased global attention and active engagement with the countries of the Lake Chad region to accelerate recovery efforts and to address the root causes of terrorism , in accordance with resolution 2349 (2017) and the recent presidential statement S/PRST/2018/3 on the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, adopted by the Security Council on 30 January.

This will require strong United Nations cooperation with regional organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Lake Chad Basin Commission, in conflict prevention and management. The United Nations should continue to take primary leadership in the maintenance of international peace and security by providing, in a predictable and sustainable manner, adequate funding and other enablers to regional initiatives and peacekeeping operations authorized by the Security Council. In this regard, we call for the expeditious disbursement of the $458 million for humanitarian purposes, announced at the 2017 Oslo conference.

On our part, the Governments of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, with the support of UNESCO, the African Development Bank, the European Union, the World Bank and the Governments of Germany, China, Canada, Japan, the Netherlands, Hungary, France, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States of America organized the International Conference on Saving the Lake Chad in Abuja, from 26 to 28 February.

The Conference, held under the theme "Saving the Lake Chad to revitalize the Basin's ecosystem for sustainable livelihood, security and development", sought, among other things, to create global awareness on the socioeconomic and environmental challenges arising from the shrinkage of the Lake Chad, threats to livelihoods, including insecurity, and others. It also discussed and developed consensus on the different options for restoring the lake, including the interbasin water transfer project from the Ubangi River in Central Africa to Lake Chad.

We are pleased to inform the Council that the Conference adopted a road map for the implementation of the recommendations of the Conference that should lead to the restoration of the lake, fishing and irrigated farming as a way of alleviating poverty, strengthening climate resilience in the basin, creating employment, leading to reduction of terrorist activities and increasing the revenue of the population and that

of the Lake Chad basin countries. We look forward to enjoying the support of the international community in implementing this well thought-out road map.

We wish to also affirm our commitment to addressing the complex and multifaceted challenges facing the region by tackling the root causes of the crises in a holistic manner. In that context, our respective Governments have developed programmes, such as the Buhari Plan of Nigeria; the Renaissance Programme of the Niger; the Recovery Road Map and the Special Youth Triennial Programme of Cameroon; Vision 2030: the Chad We Want of Chad; and the Lake Chad Development and Climate Resilience Action Plan of the Lake Chad Basin Commission.

As has been stated by many others, the special attention and support of the international community are also required to alleviate the plight of refugees and internally displaced persons in the region, particularly women and children.

As we continue on this journey towards our goal, we wish to use this medium to solicit the Council's continued collaboration and support. We must treat the issues of Lake Chad with the urgency they deserve and show the needed political commitment to reviving the Lake. Together, let us share the mission of rescuing Lake Chad with renewed vigour, determination and international collaboration, as our inaction or delay will continue to accelerate the deteriorating standard of living of millions of our people, with dire consequences for our continent.

In conclusion, let me reiterate our pledge to restore Lake Chad to its former glory. Recognizing that our efforts will be more productive with international support, we call for the full implementation of the provisions of resolution 2349 (2017), and for our international partners — technical and financial — to remain unwavering in their support.

The President: Let me once again express our appreciation to our briefers, Mr. Bila and Ms. Nagarajan.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.